

NEWS Release

For Immediate Release

Topic: LaCrosse encephalitis
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The Mississippi State Department of Health said today that a case of encephalitis that occurred in a five-year-old child from rural Noxubee County in mid-June has been identified as LaCrosse (LAC) encephalitis. The case is the second confirmed case of mosquito-borne LaCrosse encephalitis in Mississippi this year.

Testing at the State Department of Health's laboratory and at the CDC in Atlanta identified the illness as LaCrosse encephalitis. The child has recovered.

One other identified case of LAC encephalitis in Mississippi occurred in mid-May in a child from Marion County. Most cases of LAC encephalitis occur in children less than 16 years of age.

A virus transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito causes LAC encephalitis. Not all mosquitoes are infected. Most people who get the virus have no symptoms or signs of illness. An individual with LAC encephalitis might have fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, or drowsiness. Illness in young children can lead to seizures, coma, and paralysis.

"LaCrosse encephalitis can produce severe illness in humans and can, rarely, even be fatal," said Dr. Ed Thompson, State Health Officer. "We have no effective treatment. Prevention is all we have."

LAC encephalitis generally affects rural areas more than towns or cities. The normal cycle of the virus that causes LAC encephalitis occurs between mosquitoes and small mammals, but under certain conditions the virus can be transmitted to humans by certain species of mosquitoes. Person-to-person transmission does not occur.

The State Department of Health urges all residents to avoid mosquito bites:

- # Avoid mosquito-prone areas, especially at dawn and dusk, when the mosquitoes are most active
- # Wear protective clothing, such as long sleeves and long pants
- # Use insect repellent on exposed body parts (use only according to label directions)
- # Get rid of any open containers of water around the house such as old tires and paint cans where mosquitoes can breed
- # Keep the grass mowed, as this decreases the available habitat for mosquitoes.